

Springfield CONNECTION

Franconia ♦ Kingstowne
Newington

The West Springfield gymnastics team earned a state berth with a runner-up finish at the 6A North regional meet on Feb. 13 at Patriot High School.

West Springfield Gymnastics Earns State Berth

SPORTS, PAGE 12

County Budget: About \$300
More per Household

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Parents, Community
Rally to 'Invest in Kids'

NEWS, PAGE 3



Seated, from left, a panel including Fairfax-Falls Church Community Services Board Recovery Specialist Kevin Earley, Fairfax County Chief of Police Edwin Roessler, Fairfax County Sheriff Stacey Kincaid, CSB Chairman Gary Ambrose and Supervisor John Cook (R-Braddock) speaks on the merits of the new Diversion First program which puts direct offenders with mental illness in treatment centers instead of jail.



PHOTOS BY TIM PETERSON/THE CONNECTION

Dr. Jim Kelly (left), Emergency Services manager at the CSB Merrifield Center explains to reporters how individuals in custody enter the facility via a sally port. If they're struggling or in a more extreme state, they're taken to a separate emergency interview room.

Taking the Crime out of Mental Illness

Fairfax County officials announce Diversion First program designed to help individuals get treatment not jail time.

BY TIM PETERSON
THE CONNECTION

Kevin Earley said he's living proof that Diversion First works. Earley has been living with bipolar disorder and had his last episode in 2007. "I was tasered, I broke the law and endangered myself," he said.

Earley was picked up by a Fairfax County Police officer who had received Crisis Intervention Team training and driven to the hospital, not the adult detention center.

Earley said the officer spoke with a calm tone and "treated me with dignity and respect. The smallest gesture can mean the world."

He was linked with a case manager "who loved and cared for me," and he also benefitted from other psychological and family support.

"I was sick and needed help, support, not jail time," Earley said. "It shouldn't be a crime to live with mental illness."

Now Earley works as a recovery specialist with the Fairfax-Falls Church Community Services Board. He spoke to a room full of reporters and supporters on Feb. 11 at the CSB Merrifield Crisis Response Center, a massive Fairfax County-owned facility for mental illness treatment services located off Gallows Road in Fairfax.

THAT DAY a panel of government leaders explained the new program Diversion First, the main goal of which is to prevent people with mental illness from unnecessarily filling up the jail. To create more success stories like Earley's.

Fairfax County Sheriff Stacey Kincaid said about 40 percent of the jail's inmate popu-

lation has mental illness. "It used to be something taboo for people to talk about or report," she said.

After an intensive study of the mental health program in place through the Sheriff's office in Bexar County, Texas, Kincaid said her office has been making changes such as the relocation of women with mental illness to a separate housing area and change in release time to 8 a.m.

Kincaid also commented that the Diversion First program was "quite a bit" in reaction to the in-custody death of Natasha McKenna just over one year ago. Video was released of McKenna, an African American woman with mental illness, being tased numerous times by Fairfax County deputies while she struggled during an effort to transport her to Alexandria City jail.

"It certainly pushed this forward," Kincaid said.

Prior to Diversion First, deputies might bring an individual with mental illness to the CSB for evaluation or treatment, but then be responsible for waiting with them, sometimes for many hours, until they could be seen.

Now, a deputy and police officer will be stationed at the Merrifield Center for 21.5 hours every day for other officers and deputies to hand off custody and then return to duty.

"The officers love this, the morale is good," said Fairfax County Chief of Police Edwin Roessler. "We do have gaps" in policing, he said, "especially where we serve those with mental health episodes. The majority of our use of force incidents are with those suffering mental health crisis."

For their part in Diversion First, Roessler has also been working towards getting 100



CSB Chairman Gary Ambrose said the Diversion First program has taken on "a dynamism of its own" after taking several years to initiate.

percent of officers trained in Crisis Intervention Team. This year, 176 officers have already received the training, he said. CIT is a Commonwealth of Virginia-certified program that teaches officers about what it's like to live with mental illness as well as procedures for de-escalating critical episodes both in the field and jail.

"This is a great first start," he said. The police are also implementing a new Critical Decision-Making Model based on policing in Scotland, the Chief said, and are the first department in the country to do so.

The model is "the backbone of CIT," said Roessler. "The goal is to preserve the sanctity of human life."

In the first month of implementing Diversion First (Jan. 1-31), Roessler said field officers have conducted 265 mental health investigations. Of those, 40 percent involved the Merrifield Center and 39 percent had participation from a CIT-certified officer or officers.

Once an individual with mental illness arrives at the CSB Merrifield Center, either under their own power or in custody, they check in, undergo a preliminary interview and psychological and medical evaluation. From there, CSB staffers determine whether treatment or further transport to the hospital is necessary.

Roessler said Diversion First isn't meant as a pass from jail for serious offenders or violent crimes. But empowered by Diversion First, officers may use their discretion in determining lawlessness.



Fairfax-Falls Church Community Services Board Recovery Specialist Kevin Earley lives with bipolar disorder and is thankful to diversion for the way he was treated during his last mental illness episode.

IF JAIL AND HOSPITAL are ruled out for the individual, a problem currently being tackled by the General Assembly is housing. The local psychiatric hospital in Fairfax County is the Northern Virginia Mental Health Institute in Falls Church on the INOVA campus, with 123 beds.

Those include emergency psychiatric beds, involuntary beds and forensic beds, said Tisha Deeghan, executive director of the CSB. Deeghan said it's a statewide problem that facilities such as the Institute in Falls Church don't have the capacity to handle all the referrals.

"We're working in Richmond to resolve it," she said. If there is no room in Falls Church, officers or deputies then try taking the individual to another facility outside of northern Virginia.

Kincaid encouraged people to contact their elected officials about building a new mental health facility to add capacity in northern Virginia.

"It's the right thing to do," said Board of Supervisors Chairman Sharon Bulova, who explained there's a three-to-five-year funding mechanism in place to increase the capacity and services of the CSB. "There's savings in having someone not live in jail, but receive services and continue to live in the community."

For more information about Diversion First, visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/diversionfirst.

NEWS

About \$300 More per Household

County Executive: Revenue growth is insufficient to fund all priorities. Schools still \$68 million short.

BY KEN MOORE
THE CONNECTION

County Executive Ed Long recommended a four-cent increase to the real estate tax rate.

But to meet the full request of Fairfax County Public Schools, he said, would require a three-cent increase on top of the budget he built.

Long presented the FY 2017 Advertised Budget Plan to the Board of Supervisors Tuesday morning, Feb. 16.

"The budget is a discussion with the community," said Chairman Sharon Bulova.

"This is the first step," said Lee Supervisor Jeff McKay, head of the board's budget committee.

"We have to see what the reactions are," said Long.

Bulova is scheduled to advertise the FY 2017 tax rate on March 1. At that point, the board can lower but not increase from the tax rate advertised.

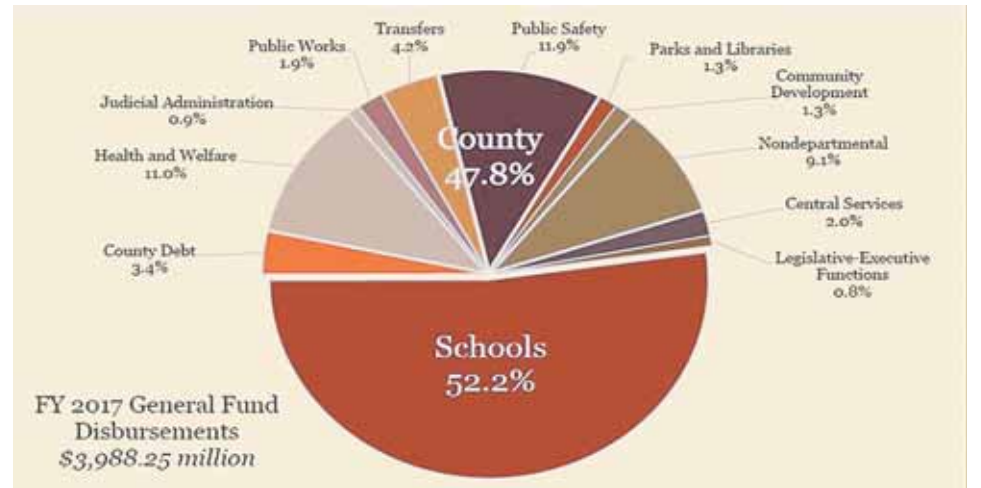
The projected value of each penny is \$23.3 million to the county, Long said.

"At the current real estate tax rate, revenue growth is insufficient to fund all of our priorities," Long told the Board of Supervisors.

But even with the increase, he warned, there are "many unmet needs and investment requirements that remain unfunded."

Each member of the Board of Supervisors will hold local community dialogues in their respective districts; then the board will hold public hearings on the budget from April 5-7.

The board will adopt the final budget on April 26.



FAIRFAX COUNTY

More than 50 percent of Fairfax County's \$3.988 billion budget will be transferred to Fairfax County Public Schools, \$68 million less than FCPS requested.

THE FEUD resumed between the School Board and the Board of Supervisors before Long's speech even concluded, with his proposed budget falling \$68 million short of what FCPS Superintendent Karen Garza

says is needed.

"We are dismayed that Fairfax County Executive Ed Long has ignored the pleas of

SEE COUNTY BUDGET, PAGE 4



Hundreds of parents and community supporters turned out to spread the message "Invest in Kids" after an advertised Fairfax County budget announced Feb. 16 leaves the public schools system around \$68 million short of its requested transfer.



PHOTOS BY TIM PETERSON/THE CONNECTION

Parents and children held up homemade signs urging support for full funding of Fairfax County Public Schools' FY 2017 budget as adopted by the School Board.

Parents, Community Supporters Rally to 'Invest in Kids'

BY TIM PETERSON
THE CONNECTION

Emotional independent outbursts and communal chants of "Fund our schools" and "Invest in kids" echoed through the grand amphitheater just beyond the entrance to the Fairfax County Government Center.

The same day Fairfax County Executive Ed Long announced his proposal for

a nearly \$4 billion county budget at the Board of Supervisors morning meeting, school advocacy groups including IamFCPS, the Fairfax County Council of PTAs, Fairfax Education Association, Fairfax FLAGS and Fairfax Arts Coalition for Education, organized a rally in the evening calling for the supervisors to fully fund the FY 2017 budget adopted by the School Board.

That budget, a \$121.4 million increase over the previous year, represents not only

a 6.7 percent increase in transfer from the county, but also enables Superintendent Dr. Karen Garza to steer the school system forward with no additional cuts to programs or services.

Though Garza won't formally present her budget to the supervisors until early April, Long's \$3.988 billion proposed budget falls short of the current requested transfer to the school system by nearly \$68 million.

"This is not good enough," said Fairfax

Education Association president Kimberly Adams. "Our children are worth more, our community is worth more, and Fairfax is willing to invest a few cents more to make sure our next generation has a bright future."

Adams was one of several speakers scheduled to speak who also included Debbie Kilpatrick, president of the Fairfax

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County Budget Presented

FROM PAGE 3

parents, students, employees and community members to fully fund Fairfax County Public Schools' budget in FY 2017," said School Board president Pat Hynes in an emailed statement. "Despite calling for a tax increase, Mr. Long's budget signals no increase to the schools above last year's budget guidance of three percent while increasing the county's budget by a greater percentage. ... This news means that, unless the Board of Supervisors provides for a funding increase above Mr. Long's recommendation, Fairfax County Public Schools will once again have to make damaging budget cuts that will reduce educational opportunities for our children."

McKay, head of the budget committee, immediately countered after the Board of Supervisors hearing. He had already read words from various school officials.

"Expressing to people somehow that the Board of Supervisors is cutting the school budget which was again expressed in writing today," said McKay, "is just technically not true."

"Let's talk about how we can better meet the school's needs but let's be truthful in presenting the facts to people about what is actually happening. While the county has dramatically increased education funding every year that I've been on board, the state has fallen further and further and further behind."

"There is a point in time in which we have to lobby the state to fix that problem," he said.

The board has increased the funding of schools by \$230 million since FY 2008, he said during the presentation. "Clearly this budget doesn't meet the transfer request of the schools and we need to do something to address that."

VIRGINIA RANKS in the top ten in both per capita and median household income but in the bottom 10 for state funding of public education, according to county documents.

"As the county has been saying for many years, the state is not meeting its share of funding for K-12 education in Fairfax County," Long said.

"That puts a tremendous strain on other parts of our budget when the state doesn't come through," Long said.

"That's an awful lot for our citizens to



PHOTO BY KEN MOORE/THE CONNECTION

County Executive Ed Long balanced this year's proposed budget with a three-cent increase on real estate, but recommends a four-cent increase.

bear," said Supervisor Pat Herrity (R-Springfield) of the proposed tax increase. "I'm hoping we can do something with our community to take the burden off the backs of our taxpayers."

Supervisor John Cook (R-Braddock) called it a "dark and dreary and ugly day."

"We are getting squeezed by national economic forces that are the worst in our lifetimes," he said. "This is where it comes to roost. Right here."

"We're going to have to get out a pencil and figure out where we can find some savings," said Cook. "Four pennies is nothing I can swallow."

"I'm not gloomy," said Supervisor Cathy Hudgins (D-Hunter Mill). "Four cents sounds like an awful lot, but I can tell you I feel stronger in the way that we can support the schools, and the ways we can support the community."

The countywide average assessment for all homes is \$527,648, and the owner of a home valued that much would see \$304 increase in property taxes. The county average assessment for a single family house is \$632,507. Assessments vary by location. In Great Falls, the average is \$1,055,249. In Centreville, the average is \$385,089.

CRITICAL ITEMS included in the budget, according to Long: FCPS operating increase of three percent; FCPS infrastructure investment; improvements in county employee compensation; investments in public safety including increased staffing, beginning implementation of Ad Hoc Police Commission recommendations and Diversion First,



PHOTO BY KEN MOORE/THE CONNECTION

The Board of Supervisors is scheduled to adopt the FY 2017 Budget on April 26. Chairman Sharon Bulova is scheduled to advertise the FY 2017 tax rate on March 1.

Budget Town Hall Meetings

Hunter Mill District Community Summit

Saturday, Feb. 20, 8:30 a.m.
Vienna Fire Station: Flame Room, 400 Center Street South, Vienna

Mount Vernon District Town Hall Meeting

Saturday, Feb. 27, 9:30 a.m.
Walt Whitman Middle School, 2500 Parkers Lane, Alexandria

Sully District / Sully District Council Budget Meeting

Monday, March 7, 7 p.m.
Rocky Run Middle School - "Little Theatre" - 4400 Stringfellow Road, Chantilly

Providence District Budget Council Budget Town Hall Meeting

Wednesday, March 9, 7 p.m.
Providence Community Center - 3001 Vaden Drive, Fairfax - Multi-Purpose Room 2

Mason District Budget Meeting

Wednesday, March 16, 7 p.m.
Mason District Government Center, 6507 Columbia Pike, Annandale - Main Community Room

Springfield District Budget Meeting

Wednesday, March 23, 7 p.m.
West Springfield Government Center - 6140 Rolling Road, Springfield - Community Room

Dranesville District Budget Meeting / McLean Citizens Association (MCA)

Wednesday, March 23, 7:30 p.m.
McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Avenue, McLean

Braddock District Budget Meeting

Monday, March 28, 7:30 p.m.
Robinson Secondary School - "Recital Hall" - 5035 Sideburn Road, Fairfax

Lee District Association of Civic Organizations Community Budget Meeting

Wednesday, March 30, 7 p.m.
Lee District Governmental Center - 6121 Franconia Road, Alexandria

Dranesville District / Great Falls Citizen's Association Budget Meeting

Thursday, March 31, 7 p.m.
The Great Falls Grange, 9818 Georgetown Pike, Great Falls

staffing for new police station in South County; spending on Human Services, including full funding for this year's intellectual disability graduates.

Several issues contribute to the revenue challenges, Long said.

❖ The local economy underperformed the national economy from 2011 - 2014.

❖ High office vacancy rate in the county - over 20 million square feet vacant out of 116.5 million square feet. As of mid-year 2015, direct office vacancy rate was 16.5 percent, highest since 1991, when it was 16.8 percent.

❖ Local real estate market is

underperforming the nation, so county's FY 2017 real estate tax growth lower than anticipated.

But "looking forward," Long said, "there's reasons for optimism. I'm optimistic about our local economy."

The board adopted the Economic Strategic Plan, he said.

"The Silver Line is going ahead full steam and we are going to see that opening up in 2019-2020. That gives reason for optimism," he said.

"And all the rezoning in Tysons and Reston, I'm extremely optimistic we are going to grow our commercial base."

NEWS

Springfield Man Charged with Murder in Feb. 10 Stabbing

Though the investigation is ongoing, Fairfax County Police said they have arrested and charged 20-year-old Dilshad Dosky of Springfield with murdering Shaki E. Phillip.

Officers initially responded to the 7400 block of Loughboro Lane in Springfield on Feb. 10 around 2 p.m. and found Phillip, 19, unresponsive with a stab wound to

his upper body. He was taken to Inova Fairfax Hospital and died shortly after arriving.

The Medical Examiner's office has yet to release the official cause and manner of death.

To assist the Homicide and Fugitive Squads detectives, Fairfax County Police ask anyone with



FAIRFAX COUNTY POLICE
Dilshad Dosky of Springfield

more information about this crime to contact Crime Solvers online at www.fairfaxcrime-solvers.org or text-a-tip by texting "TIP187" plus a message to CRIMES (274637) or by calling 1-866-411-TIPS(8477). The Fairfax County Police non-emergency line is 703-691-2131.

—TIM PETERSON

FAITH NOTES

Lenten Soup Supper. Fridays from Feb. 26-March 18, 5:30-7 p.m. will be offered at **Holy Spirit School** Cafeteria, 8800 Braddock Road, Annandale. Meatless soup suppers on Fridays during Lent, followed by the Stations of the Cross in the Church at 7 p.m. Free. Contact Lambie Renner, lrenner@holyspiritchurch.us.

Lord of Life Lutheran offers services at two locations, in Fairfax at 5114 Twinbrook Road and in Clifton at 13421 Twin Lakes Drive. Services in Fairfax are held on Saturdays at 5:30 p.m. and Sundays at 8:30 and 10 a.m. Services in Clifton are held on Sundays at 8:15 and 10:30 a.m. 703-323-9500 or www.Lordoflifeva.org.

Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, 8304 Old Keene Mill Road, Springfield, offers casual worship services on Saturday evenings at 5:30 p.m. featuring contemporary music. More traditional services take place on Sunday mornings at 8:15 and 11 a.m. Sunday School is from 9:45-10:45 a.m. for children and adults. The church also offers discussion groups for adults. 703-451-5855 or www.poplc.org.

Kirkwood Presbyterian Church, 8336 Carrleigh Parkway in Springfield, supports a Mothers of Preschoolers (MOPS) program on the first and third Wednesday of each month. Meetings are 9:30-11:30 a.m. at the church. All mothers and children are welcome. The

program provides mothers an opportunity to get to know other mothers through discussions and craft activities. Register. 703-451-5320.

Franconia United Methodist Church, 6037 Franconia Road, Alexandria, offers traditional Sunday church services at 8:30 a.m. and 11 a.m. plus Sunday School classes for all ages at 9:45 a.m. Childcare is available 8:15 a.m.-12:15 p.m. There will be a Terry Hall Concert on Saturday, April 14 at 4 p.m. with old spirituals, classic hymns, southern gospel favorites and more. 703-971-5151 or admin@franconiaumc.org or www.franconiaumc.org.

SEE FAITH, PAGE 7

Looking for a New Place of Worship?
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OPINION

Fairfax Presses Ahead with Diversion First

When police encounter someone in mental health crisis, they can transport them to Merrifield Crisis Response Center instead of jail.

Natasha McKenna died a little more than a year ago on Feb. 7, 2015. McKenna, with a long history of severe and often untreated mental illness, had been deteriorating in the Fairfax County Adult Detention Center since Jan. 26, 2015, arriving directly from release from the hospital on an outstanding warrant from the City of Alexandria charging felonious assault on an Alexandria police officer.

We can't know whether new efforts to provide people in mental health crisis might have saved her life if they were available and put in place early in this particular crisis, which appears to have begun a month before her death. McKenna's death is a terrible tragedy, and no new program will remove that horror.

But it's clear that treatment rather than jail can make all the difference for many people who come into contact with law enforcement in a mental health crisis. Diversion First is a collaborative effort in Fairfax County to reduce the number of people with mental illness in the county jail by diverting low risk offenders experiencing a mental health crisis to treatment rather than bringing them to jail.

Sheriff Stacey Kincaid estimates that 40 percent of detainees at the Fairfax County Adult Detention Center have mental illness. Notably, it is far more expensive to house someone in county jail than to provide treatment.

The collaborative effort was in no small part launched by Supervisor John Cook when he

asked that the Board of Supervisors to add crisis intervention training to the scope of work of the Ad Hoc Police Practices Review Commission. The Mental Health subcommittee along with the Community Services Board, the Sheriff's Department, police and mental health advocates set and met an aggressive agenda and timetable for implementation, with the program actually beginning in less than a year, on Jan. 1, 2016. In the first month, the Merrifield Crisis Response Center handled more than 100 cases involving police and people in mental health crisis.

Merrifield Crisis Response Center operates as an assessment site where police are able to transfer custody of nonviolent offenders who may need mental health services to a CIT-trained officer or deputy assigned there, instead of taking them to jail.

How far-reaching, life-saving and resource-preserving Diversion First will turn out to be will depend on how it is implemented and the discretion and policies of the police and prosecutors, among others.

Freedom of Information on Life Support in General Assembly?

Sen. Chap Petersen (D-34) cites FOIA on life

support in his blog oxroadsouth.com:

"Last week, the Assembly passed SB 202, which undid a major push eight years ago to ensure that all of our public spending was 'online' and searchable by ordinary citizens. This, of course, meant disclosing the salaries of public employees over a certain income level. However, SB 202

has undone all of that, which means that you will no longer know how much a public employee (even a city manager) is paid unless you make a formal FOIA request. (Because we all have time to do that).

"This bad idea passed on a 27-12 vote.

"Today the Senate passed SB 552 which is even more sweeping. It actually prohibits from disclosure not just the salary information but even the names of public safety personnel, including the Sheriff, the Chief of Police and the Fire Chief.

"On the floor today, I pointed out that a Chief of Police could put his own family on the payroll and be protected from disclosure. This could also be an issue if a law enforcement agency hires an officer with a poor record from another jurisdiction — and nobody knows. Again, who are we protecting?"

"Again, the bill passed 25-15."

"If I'm making a veto list, these two are definitely on it."

We agree.

— MARY KIMM

MKIMM@CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM

Regional Gas Tax, Digital Divide and Identity Protection

BY SCOTT SUROVELL
STATE SENATOR (D-36)

The fifth week of the General Assembly Session brought some long days and nights as we rushed to complete work on bills before our mid-session deadline called "Cross-over."

First the Senate passed legislation to plug a hole in the Northern Virginia 2.1 percent regional gas tax that is used to fund transit. This legislation was the top priority for Fairfax, Prince William and Stafford counties. It now goes on to an uncertain future in the House of Delegates, but without the legislation, localities will be under even more pressure to raise real estate taxes if we expect to maintain the same level of transit service.

Eleven of my bills have passed the full Senate with two more still waiting for final passage. One bill involved improving the fairness of protective order proceedings and another ensured that Virginians



can enforce subpoenas in civil and criminal cases in Virginia due to a recent Supreme Court of Virginia opinion.

My legislation to help close the Digital Divide moved through committee this week. Today's children learn digitally and digital literacy is a key job skill in a modern workforce. However, low income families often cannot afford devices or broadband connections.

After I learned Fairfax County was using electronic textbooks and failing to provide computers for low income families to use them at home, I introduced legislation to require any school using electronic textbooks to provide a digital device to every student. The legislation was vetted and approved by the Joint Commission on Technology and Science but was tabled in the House. Last week, the Senate Education, Health and Welfare Committee

passed the bill on a 14-1 vote.

The proliferation of companies providing background checks for people has led to an increase in dissemination of inaccurate information. This severely limits Virginians' opportunities, especially in employment and housing. My legislation to create a Virginia-based cause of action to remedy these situations and hold companies accountable for putting out inaccurate information passed the Senate.

Several of my law firm clients and lawyers in Northern Virginia have told me that some orthopedic practices are refusing to see individuals who have suffered injuries in vehicle collisions — even if they have insurance. My bill to require insurance companies to contractually prohibit doctors from refusing patients based on how they were injured was continued to 2017 so we can convene meetings between insurance companies, doctors, and other stakeholders to mediate a resolution.

If you have any feedback, please send me a note at scott@scottsuovell.org. It is an honor to serve as your state senator.

Write

The Connection welcomes views on any public issue. The deadline for all material is noon Friday. Letters must be signed. Include home address and home and business numbers. Letters are routinely edited for libel, grammar, good taste and factual errors. Send to:

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Call: 703-917-6444.

By e-mail: south@connectionnewspapers.com

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OBITUARY

Leah Angela Socha, 66, of Fairfax, Dies

Leah Angela Socha was born Aug. 28, 1949 in Meriden, Conn. to George Kakis and Evelyn Mitchell. She attended High School in Wethersfield, Conn. then moved to Massachusetts where she met her husband Bernie. Leah lived in New England for over 25 years, moved to Chicago for a short time with her husband and son and eventually settled down in Virginia, living in Springfield, Fairfax and Burke, where she raised her growing family for over 35 years.

Leah and Bernie raised four children who now live in Burke, Denver, Colo. and Los Angeles. She had four grandchildren.

Leah met her husband Bernie at their place of work in Massachusetts. She was an avid cook, famous for her Greek dishes (including an incredible baklava) and a mouth-watering meatloaf, which is now served at Bernie's Deli in Fairfax. She passes down an extensive book of recipes to the next generation, many hand-written or with hand-written notes, to guide them through the years.

Leah was a partner with her husband in Wagshals, a Washington, D.C. institution, which was purchased from the Wagshal family in the early 90s with the Fuchs family of Burke and expanded over the years. Leah was also a partner in



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Lela Angela Socha

Bernie's Delicatessen and Market in Fairfax. Many may not know that she also worked for some time as a licensed private investigator for a Virginia law firm. She had many talents.

Leah was 100 percent Greek and has family in Greece to this day. She traveled throughout the world including Greece, England, France, Switzerland, Italy, Egypt, Caribbean Islands, Mexico and the Virgin Islands. She was a league bowler for many years, frequenting Bowl America in Burke with her bowling buddies. She loved going to the beach, visiting extended family in Massachusetts, hosting Memorial Day 'Chicken

Fire' barbecues for friends and family for over 15 years and spending time with her family.

Leah is survived by her husband Bernard Stanley Socha, sons Michael David and Matthew Bernard; daughters Victoria Lynn and Jennifer Michelle; four grandchildren Benjamin, Brooke, Jessica, Rachel; many loving nieces, nephews and a large extended family. Leah was a loving mother, wife, grandmother and friend to so many.

Her memorial service was on Saturday, Feb. 13 at Fairfax Memorial Funeral Home in Fairfax.

Memorial donations may be made to the American Lung Association in Leah's name to honor her life and help fund research to find a cure for interstitial lung disease and lung cancer.

Donate at www.lung.org or in honor donation at https://secure3.convio.net/ala/site/Donation2?df_id=31272&31272.donation=form1.

To send condolences to the family you may email one of the family members for more information or send to the funeral home directly. The family would also love for you to leave a comment and share your memories of Leah at <http://www.fairfaxmemorialfuneralhome.com/obituary/Leah-Angela-Socha/Fairfax-VA/1587999>.

FAITH NOTES

FROM PAGE 5

RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults) is for people interested in becoming Catholic or learning about the Catholic Church. A group meets at 7:30 p.m. on July 6 and 20 at St. Leo the Great Catholic Church, 3700 Old Lee Highway, Fairfax. A group will meet every Wednesday. All are welcome. Contact Carolyn Smith at 703-273-5369 or carolynsmith.stleos@gmail.com.

The Jewish Social Services

Agency (JSSA) offers a wide variety of support groups for those with emotional, social, and physical challenges. www.jssa.org/growth-learning.

Metropolitan Community Church of Northern Virginia, 10383 Democracy Lane in Fairfax, presents worship services on Sundays at 9 a.m. and 11 a.m. and choir practice (open to all) on Tuesdays at 7:15 p.m. www.mccnova.com or 703-691-0930.

Church of the Nativity offers a free general bereavement support group open to all adults on the first and third Thursday of each month 7:30-9 p.m. The

church is located at 6400 Nativity Lane, Burke. Call 703-455-2400, ext. 17.

Arabic Bible Baptist Church is located at 6428 Ox Road in Fairfax Station. Services are on Saturdays at 6:30 p.m. and Sundays at 1 p.m. Pastor: Wissam Jamil. Call 703-273-5599.

A casual worship service with a praise band is at 9:45 a.m. at Sydenstricker United Methodist Church, 8508 Hooes Road in Springfield. www.sumcdisciples.org or 703-451-8223.

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Touching Many Hearts

BY ANDREA WORKER
THE CONNECTION

They say that charity begins at home. Helen Yi and Taylor, the mother and daughter co-founders of Touching Heart, a nonprofit aimed at educating and inspiring children to empathize with the needs of others and to take action to assist them, have no argument with that statement. But they have taken that idea out of the home's front door, down the steps and out into the streets beyond. Since 2010, they have grown a dedicated group that has produced "Kids on a Mission" (KOAM) – children who are taught how to host their own fundraising events from selection of a cause, logistically preparing the event, developing budgets and seeing the plan through to fruition.

POSTPONED from last month's Snowzilla Day, Touching Heart held its second annual Minecraft for a Mission event on Feb. 6 at the Art and Design Building on the George Mason University campus in Fairfax, hosted by the Mason Game and Technology Academy. The event was a group playing of the Minecraft video game, with two computer labs filled with teams sharing their ideas and resources as they built their Minecraft worlds and filled them with tools and treasures. Current and former students of the Academy volunteered their time and computer wizardry to build the enclosed network for the gamers and even staffed the event to keep things running smoothly, provide additional instruction, and a helping hand when needed. With the registrants numbering better than 50 youngsters aged 8 - 12 and a registration fee of \$45 per participant, these Kids on a Mission raised a significant amount of money for foster care programs and residents in Fairfax and Loudoun County and Alexandria.

"The kids choose a variety of people and organizations to assist," said Helen Yi, but the primary focus was on aiding other children less fortunate. The local foster care programs are a top priority for many of the fundraisers, but under the KOAM flag, youngsters have made meals for the homeless, raised funds to buy mattresses for an orphanage in Kenya and help them build a wall, and invested in projects like chicken farming and solar energy panels around the globe, helping struggling communities to become more self-sufficient. "It's amazing and humbling what these young people can do once you show them the needs," said Yi.

Minecraft for a Mission could have daunted even the most skilled event organizer, but the three primary organizers, who handled everything from recruiting sponsors to the logistics on the day, and even the opening ceremony instructions and remarks, seemed to take it all in stride were middle-school students Devin Host, Alex Lee and Lottie Dubert from the Nysmith School in Herndon.

Devin, who had participated in other KOAM activities, brought his friend Alex into the fold. Mutual friend Lottie heard



Organizers, staff and associates of Touching Heart show their signature move at the 2016 Minecraft for a Mission event to raise funds for local foster care programs and children.



The young organizers of this year's Minecraft for a Mission event are Nysmith School eighth graders Lottie Dubert, Devin Host and Alex Lee. The trio recruited sponsors, developed the promotional materials and worked out the logistics for the charitable group-gaming day.

them discussing their plans and knew she, too, had to join in.

"Getting the sponsors, that was probably the most difficult thing to do because we had never done cold-calling before," said Devin. On one occasion the trio walked the entire Fair Lakes Mall, making their pitch at each retailer. "Really," added Devin, as Alex and Lottie nodded their agreement, "that experience was one of the best things we got out of this. You really learn to be confident and state your case." Apparently their dedication and growing sales skills did the trick, garnering the event a number of sponsors, including one for whom Alex, with his graphic design skills, was able to develop a logo.

Minecraft for a Mission – Touching Heart and their "Kids on a Mission" raise funds for children in foster care.



Dad John Howells had some difficulty getting Minecraft for a Mission participant son Kenneth to stand still long enough to re-fuel before heading back for the afternoon gaming session. The fifth-grader from Reston heard about the event from a neighbor. "I like Minecraft and this is a good thing to do," said Kenneth, in between quick bites.

TOUCHING HEART offers an eight-week after school "Art of Giving Workshop" at several local schools. "And hopefully beyond fairly soon," said co-founder Helen Yi. The circle widens on its own, with one child who has participated in a workshop or in a KOAM project telling another child who either joins in or contacts Touching Heart for help in organizing their own project. Those two young philanthropists then spread the word, and the good works and development of compassionate young leaders keeps moving forward. This growth was on display at the Minecraft event, with several youngsters participating remotely from as far away as Sweden, children attending from way beyond Touching Heart's home-base of

Herndon, and another gamer who had played last year, then moved to Florida, but whose parents were willing to bring him back just for this charitable gathering.

"It's heartening to see that their interest in helping others doesn't end after one project," said Touching Heart Outreach Manager Susan Tseng.

Touching Heart has a number of events, activities and opportunities on their calendar this year. Learn more about their story, check out upcoming events like a "Movie Day" to support that Kenyan orphanage or the annual Touching Heart Golf Tournament fundraiser, get involved or become one of the Kids on a Mission, by checking out its website at www.touchingheart.com.



PHOTO COURTESY OF DIETRICH'S KARATE FITNESS AND LIFE SKILLS

Students work on light saber skills during a class at Dietrich's Karate Fitness and Life Skills in Burke.

Star Wars Fans Flock to Local Classes

Movie's popularity leaves fans wanting to feel "The Force."

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL
THE CONNECTION

Beams of neon light flash around a dark room. Young Star Wars fans from a galaxy not so far away wield light sabers and move with carefully choreographed steps. These Jedi-in-training are undergoing a fantasy combat training that melds martial arts with light saber fighting, Star Wars-style.

"Star Wars fans are the ultimate martial arts enthusiasts. Star Wars is 100 percent developed on the concepts and philosophies of martial arts ... the use of the sword, the belief structure," said Michael Dietrich of Dietrich's Karate Fitness and Life Skills in Burke. "Now we have an opportunity to invite students because of their interest in the movie. It's an easy way to bring them into our schools and show them what martial arts are all about."

Building on the hype surrounding the recent release of "Star Wars: Episode VII - The Force Awakens," Dietrich began offering classes at his newly created "Laser Saber Academy." Students sign up for a six-week class, where they learn how to use a light saber, tap into "The Force," and improve their focus, discipline and determination.

"Any time a new movie or TV show comes out that features a robot, there is a spike in

interest in robotics," said Dan Gallagher of RobotWorks in Burke. "Every kid I've talked to since the Star Wars movie came out wants to know how BB-8 works. Before that, they talked about other robots like Wall-E, R2D2, and Baymax."

At RobotWorks, Gallagher's students learn basic robot design, construction and programming. "In general, though, kids are always interested in robots and how they work. Robots are fun," said Gallagher. "Building robots is even more fun, so we see a steady interest that might jump a little when a new movie robot makes an appearance because it acts as a reminder of that interest — bringing it back to the front burner."

The concepts of the Star Wars universe are seeping into the extracurricular class choices at local schools, with students opting to take offerings like robotics and 3-D modeling. "I think that there is some interest in our STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, the Arts and Mathematics) activities that grows from sci-fi movies like Star Wars,"

said Richard Rho, director of Technology Education and Innovation at St. Stephen's & St. Agnes School. "I have had students 3D model and print the Tie Fighters and X Wing from the movies as well as talking about how we could create our own BB-8 droid in the robotics lab as the off season project."

Educators say that such activities are fun and engaging while also educational. "It's great students are getting inspired by the movie to create ideas and designs and spreading that interest with the rest of our community," said Rho.

"Any time a new movie or TV show comes out that features a robot, there is a spike in interest in robotics."

— Dan Gallagher of RobotWorks in Burke

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CALENDAR

Send notes to the Connection at south@connectionnewspapers.com or call 703-778-9416. The deadline is the Friday prior to the next paper's publication. Dated announcements should be submitted at least two weeks prior to the event.



From left — Benjamin Eckman of Burke is cast as “Ali Hakim” and Will Gotten of Clifton is cast as “Jud Fry” in the Good Shepherd Players production of Rodgers and Hammerstein’s musical “Oklahoma!”



From left, Elizabeth Gillespie as “Laurey” and Bethany and Bailey Eckman of Burke share a moment together after Laurey’s wedding.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF LINDA BILOTTI

Theater as Family Good Shepherd Players mark 35 years with “Oklahoma!”

BY TIM PETERSON
THE CONNECTION

Carol St. Germain of Burke has theater in her blood. She and her husband met working on productions at Lynchburg College, she followed him as he pursued a career in theater design and together, they’ve worked to bring shows to life with the Good Shepherd Players for the last three decades.

“We’ve always loved theater,” said St. Germain. “Once you get it in your blood, it’s part of you.” St. Germain teaches English as a Second Language at The Church of the Good Shepherd, the company’s home base.

The Players are celebrating their 35th year with a production of Rodgers and Hammerstein’s old frontier-themed musical “Oklahoma!” opening this weekend. St. Germain has been in the chorus or specialized in prop decoration for 33 of those 35 years.

St. Germain remembers trying out for “Fiddler on the Roof” in the Players’ second year. The next year, for “Music Man,” she won a lead role. “It’s been downhill ever since,” she joked. But in all seriousness, St. Germain is excited about the professional-level rotating set piece in this “Oklahoma!” that doubles as a farmhouse porch on one side and a rustic smokehouse on the other.

UNLIKE PURELY PROFESSIONAL productions, many members of the Good Shepherd Players have performed alongside one another for years. The group is inclusive of multiple generations and, as of two years



Elizabeth Gillespie as Laurey Williams entertaining dance date offers from characters Curly and Jud.

ago, amended its bylaws to invite performers from outside the church to participate.

“It’s just people who enjoy theater and enjoy being with a group,” St. Germain said of the Players, which now includes a variety of faiths in addition to Episcopalians from Good Shepherd, such as Catholic performers from Church of the Nativity in Burke.

Brian Walsh of Burke performed with the Players as a teenager, over a decade ago. He was in “Into the Woods” at Lake Braddock Secondary School and appreciates the opportunity shows with the Players give many students who compete for fiercely contested roles in school productions.

“It’s a chance to give those kids who might not have had a chance otherwise to be onstage, to have a part,” he said. As the church’s youth minister, Walsh gets to see the impact of students’ participation firsthand. “It’s really special for them, for the families.”

Walsh now has a head role in “Oklahoma!” as Curley McLain,



Burke residents Tricia Tyrell as “Ado Annie” and Jim Mroz as “Will Parker” rehearse for the Good Shepherd Players production of “Oklahoma!”

the love-struck cowboy trying to win the heart of farmer’s daughter Laurey Williams, set against the historic backdrop of 1906 Oklahoma Territory. The classic work of American theater canon first opened on Broadway in March 1943.

As an adult, Walsh has come full circle and enjoys performing across from people he’s known most of his life.

“You almost get to start a new relationship with a lot of people who you knew,” he said. “It’s being treated like an equal by people who knew me when I was eight years old. It’s like performing with my family.”

Fourth-year director Nancy Lavalley of Springfield said the familial dynamic is what makes Good Shepherd Players stand out from other theater companies.

“We form our own community and support each other through thick and thin,” she said, “through adversity, trouble. It’s family in a way I don’t think professional theater really is.”

With a cast of 40 performers whose experiences span professional musicians to people who’ve never set foot onstage before, Lavalley said having a helpful, communal culture is key to being successful.

“We all support and learn from each other, which makes for a really special production,” she said. “I think you’ll see that onstage. A lot of us been working together for a decade or more — you’ll see the joy we have of being together, doing this for the audience.”

“OKLAHOMA!” opens Friday, Feb. 26 at 7:30 p.m. at The Church of the Good Shepherd, located at 9350 Braddock Road in Burke.

Tickets are \$15 for adults and \$10 for students. Additional shows are Saturdays, Feb. 27 and March 5 at 7:30 p.m., and Sundays, Feb. 28 and March 6 at 2 p.m. For more information, visit www.goodshepherdplayers.com.

SATURDAY/FEB. 20

Roy Assaf Trio and Tamar Barzel. 7 p.m. Jewish Community Center of Northern Virginia, 8900 Little River Turnpike, Fairfax. Israeli jazz pianist Roy Assaf and author of “New York Noise, Radical Jewish Music and the Downtown Scene” Tamar Barzel. Author talk at 7 p.m. is free. Performance at 8 p.m. \$20-\$34. www.jccnvarts.org. 703-537-3000.

Open Mic Coffee House. 6:30-9 p.m. Calvary Baptist Church, 9301 Little River Turnpike, Fairfax. The public is invited for good food, good music, good company. Everyone’s welcome. Free. 703-955-2039.

Glass Icon. 10 a.m.-1 p.m. W-10, 9518 Workhouse Way, Lorton. Learn this 17th-century method to create a simple Christian icon. A 5”x7” framed Archangel Michael or Gabriel will be reverse painted in class. \$8 payable to instructor for paints and other materials. Bring 5” x 7” frame. \$65. www.workhousearts.org. 703-584-2900.

SATURDAY-SUNDAY/FEB. 20-21

Broadway Memories. Saturday, 8 p.m. Sunday, 1 p.m. W-16, Vulcan Muse, 9518 Workhouse Way, Lorton. Featuring a diverse collection of music selected by the performers themselves, each representing their favorite music and their roles that they have played, and a few that they still wish to play. \$20-\$25. www.workhousearts.org.

SUNDAY/FEB. 21

Winter Concert-Northern Virginia Youth Winds. 3 p.m. WT Woodson High School, 9525 Main St., Fairfax. Free. <http://www.fairfaxband.org>.

Night Hike. 6:30 p.m. 7315 Ox Road, Fairfax Station. Take a nighttime walk with a naturalist to search for wildlife. The hike concludes with a campfire. S’mores ingredients provided. Children must be accompanied by an adult registered in the program. \$8. <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/burkelakepark/rides.htm>.

Bazaar/Fun Fair. 2-5 p.m. Living Savior Lutheran Church, 5500 Ox Road, Fairfax Station. Benefits Leukemia and Lymphoma Society. Features Pampered Chef, baked treats, face painting, Star Wars impersonators. alicetdclark@hotmail.com. 703-293-1617.

Model N Gauge Train Display. 1-4 p.m. Fairfax Station Railroad Museum, 11200 Fairfax Station Road, Fairfax. The Northern Virginia NTRAK group will have running N Gauge model trains. Free-\$4. jhills712@aol.com.

SUNDAY-MONDAY/FEB. 21-22

Children and Teen Book and Media Sale. Sunday, 1-5 p.m. Monday, 10 a.m.-7:30 p.m. Burke Centre Library, 5935 Freds Oak Road, Burke. 703-249-1520.

MONDAY/FEB. 22

“Kandahar Journals” and Louie Palu. 7:30 p.m. Johnson Center Cinema, 4400 University Drive, Fairfax. A photojournalist’s firsthand reflections while covering war. Louie Palu’s experiences with several Canadian and American regiments in Afghanistan for five years. <http://www.kandaharjournals.com>.

SEE CALENDAR, PAGE 11

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CALENDAR



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

The Roy Assaf Trio will perform at the Jewish Community Center of Northern Virginia on Saturday, Feb. 20.

FROM PAGE 10

fams.gmu.edu/events/5705.

available both days of the show. Free.
www.springfieldstampclub.org.

TUESDAY/FEB. 23

Robinson Orchestra Concert. 7 p.m. Russell Theater, Robinson Secondary School, 5035 Sideburn Road, Fairfax. Middle School students will perform "Farandole" from Bizet's L'Arlesienne Suite No. 2, "Danny Boy," "When Johnny Comes Marching Home" and "The Speckled Hen" Overture. Free. 703-426-2143.

SATURDAY/FEB. 27

Dessert on Broadway. 1:30, 7 p.m. Lake Braddock High School Cafeteria, 9200 Burke Lake Road, Burke. Sweeten up your Saturday watching performances from popular Broadway musicals while you delve into delectable desserts. \$20. www.brownpapertickets.com, search Lake Braddock.

SATURDAY-SUNDAY/FEB. 27-28

46th Annual Springpex Stamp Show. Saturday, 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Sunday, 11 a.m.-4:30 p.m. Robert E. Lee High School, 6540 Franconia Road, Springfield. Sales bourse of 26 stamp dealers from throughout the Eastern U.S., and the Washington metropolitan area. In addition to the exhibits and sales bourse, special commemorative cachet covers and postal cancellations created by the show sponsors will be available. A US Postal Service sales booth will be

TUESDAY/MARCH 1

BHS Presents. 7-8 p.m. Burke Centre Library, 5935 Freds Oak Road, Burke. The Burke Historical Society is pleased to be partnering with Burke Centre Library to offer a program on historical inquiry into Patents, Trademarks and Copyrights. Free. slawski_brian@yahoo.com.

SATURDAY/MARCH 5

Grow Your Health. 10 a.m.-5:30 p.m. Fairfax High School, 3501 Rebel Run Fairfax. Celebrate home gardening, sourcing organic and local food, and nutrition and wellness. This is a family focused event that includes education and entertainment for children of all ages. http://www.growyourhealthnova.com/.

Campfire Saturday: Stargazing. 6:30 p.m. Burke Lake Park, 7315 Ox Road, Fairfax Station. Enjoy a stroll along the shores of the lake and learn about the constellations, their stories and other features of the night sky. Our astronomical naturalist will identify the stars for you, along with having some telescopes on hand for folks to try out. The program concludes with a campfire s'mores ingredients provided, hot dogs welcome. Children must be accompanied by an adult registered in the program. www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/burkelakepark/rides.htm.



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SPORTS

West Springfield sophomore Abbie Levine qualified for states in all-around with a third-place finish at the 6A North region gymnastics meet on Feb. 13. Freshman teammate Hannah Dotson tied for sixth.

PHOTO BY
JON ROETMAN/
THE CONNECTION



West Springfield Gymnastics Earns State Berth

Spartans finish runner-up at regional meet.

BY JON ROETMAN
THE CONNECTION

West Springfield head coach Diana Edgell came to a pair of conclusions while observing during the 6A North region gymnastics meet.

- 1: The Spartans probably weren't going to win.
- 2: The Spartans performed well enough to compete with the best of the rest.

If Edgell was correct on both accounts, it would leave just one scenario in which West Springfield's season would continue beyond Saturday's regional meet: a second-place finish, which comes with a state berth.

A talented and deep Yorktown team would be announced as region champion. The Patriots produced a score of 146.05, nearly 2.5 points better than their closest competitor.

Moments before the winner was announced, however, Edgell's observations proved to be right on the money.

Members of the West Springfield gymnastics team celebrated on the gym floor at Patriot High School after it was announced the Spartans had finished second at regionals on Feb. 13. Nine days after winning the Conference 7 title — the program's first conference/district championship since 2007 — West Springfield produced a score of 143.575 at regionals and earned a spot at the state meet on Friday, Feb. 19 at Kellam High School in Virginia Beach.

"We didn't know. We had no idea where we would be," said Edgell, a 2003 West Springfield graduate and former cheerleader. "I was pretty sure we weren't going to win. After that, it was anyone's game. We really had no idea, so it was pretty exciting that we pulled it out. ... I thought we were doing well, and so I knew that if we did well, that we could have a chance. If we scored a little better, if we cleaned up some things on some different events that we did have a shot. I was pleased to see the improvements that we made."

Defending state champion McLean finished third with a score of 142.625, followed by Battlefield (141.25), Lake Braddock (139.625), Osbourn Park (139.625), Chantilly (133.525) and Oakton (130.225).

West Springfield sophomore Abbie Levine produced an all-around score of 37 and qualified for states with a third-place finish.

"She actually didn't have that great of a meet for her, so I was thrilled that she was able to qualify and will hopefully have a better meet at states, redeem some of the mishaps she had today," Edgell said. "She's just great. She's fearless and determined and always positive. She never gets down on herself. She always believes in herself and that's what I expect from her and she delivers."

Levine finished second on floor (9.525), placed fourth on vault (9.45), tied for sixth on bars (8.875) and finished ninth on beam (9.15).

"I feel very proud of myself," Levine wrote in an email, "and it makes me excited to know that there was room for improvement because I fell on two events."

Spartan freshman Hannah Dotson tied for sixth in all-around with a score of 36.55. She qualified for states as an individual on bars, placing second with a score of 9.5.

"Hannah Dotson was awesome," Edgell said. "She's a freshman and has no high school competitive experience. The fact that she can come in and can qualify individually on [bars] is just awesome. I'm super proud of her."

West Springfield freshman Alex Marsden qualified for states on beam, tying for sixth with a score of 9.35.

Abby Stout also competed for West Springfield.

"I'm so proud of them," Edgell said. "They lived up to every potential that they had and I couldn't be more thrilled for the girls because they've really worked so hard to get it."

After Friday's team competition, the individual state meet will be held Saturday, Feb. 20 at Kellam High School.

"I was on the team last year as well as this year and I can definitely see huge improvements," Levine wrote. "Not only because we added more people but because our team is more bonded and we're working together better. Personally, I've noticed that I am more motivated to do well this year. I'm having more fun with this sport that I previously did not have."

What are Edgell's expectations for states?

"I want to go and have fun," she said. "Other than that, I don't know. I know there's going to be a lot of really amazing gymnastics, a lot of really talented gymnasts there, so I just want to go and have fun because it's incredible that we've made it this far."



PHOTO BY JON ROETMAN/THE CONNECTION

Hayfield senior gymnast Molly Overstreet won the 6A North region bars championship on Feb. 13 at Patriot High School.

Hayfield's Overstreet Wins Region Bars Title

Molly Overstreet's decorated high school gymnastics career will conclude with a fourth trip to the state meet.

The Hayfield senior and two-time state champion qualified for states in two events during the 6A North region gymnastics meet on Feb. 13 at Patriot High School. Overstreet repeated as region bars champion and tied for third on floor.

The top eight finishers in each event qualify for states.

Overstreet received a score of 9.8 bars and 9.5 on floor.

"I feel like my routine on bars was good and I'm very happy to have finished first," Overstreet wrote in an email. "... I was very happy with my floor. It was the first time I competed my one-and-a-half twist this season, so I was a little nervous about it."

Overstreet tied for sixth in the all-around (36.55). She tied for

20th on beam (8.7) and tied for 29th on vault (8.55).

Overstreet's performance at regionals came eight days after she won the Conference 6 all-around championship with a score of 37.875 — her first conference all-around title.

As a sophomore, Overstreet won the state bars championship with a VHSL record score of 9.925. As a freshman, she won a share of the state vault title with a 9.8.

The individual state championship meet is scheduled for Saturday, Feb. 20 at Kellam High School in Virginia Beach.

"For states I'm just trying to clean up my bar routine, mostly just my form throughout," Overstreet wrote. "... My goals for states are to just hit my routines and make them clean."

— JON ROETMAN

SPORTS ROUNDUPS

Loudoun Freedom Tryouts

The Loudoun Freedom is a competitive basketball organization for girls only. It provides players the opportunity to develop advanced basketball skills and knowledge, and to play in a very competitive environment. The Freedom emphasizes player development starting in third grade and continuing through high school. Open tryouts will be held for grades 3-8 on Sunday, Feb. 21 at Harmony Middle School.

Teams are formed at all playing levels to include an ELITE team at the eighth-grade level. Please visit www.LoudounFreedom.com for specific tryout times/locations. Pre-registration is highly encouraged.

Potomac Field Hockey Registration

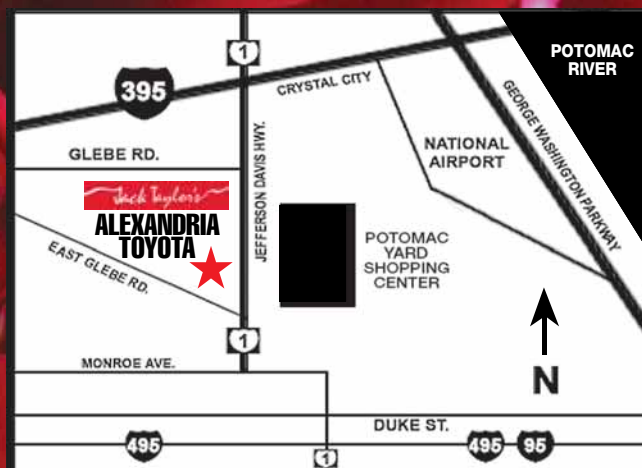
Registration is now open for Potomac Field Hockey's spring FUNdamental program for Pre-K through second grade and Youth Rec league program for grades 3-8. No experience necessary. Once-weekly team practices with games on Saturdays. Technical skills sessions included. Season begins March 28 and runs through June 4. For more information or to register, visit www.potomacfieldhockey.org or email info@potomacfieldhockey.org.

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Send notes to the Connection at south@connectionnewspapers.com or call 703-778-9416. The deadline for submissions is the Friday prior to publication. Dated announcements should be submitted at least two weeks prior to the event.

THURSDAYS/THROUGH MARCH 3

Job Seekers Seminar. 7-8:30 p.m. Immanuel Bible Church, 6991 Braddock Road, Springfield. Looking for a job? Are you confident on how to search for one? IBC's Job Seeker Seminar will equip attendees with the knowledge necessary. \$15. 703-220-5165. <http://immanuelbible.net/stewardship/job-seekers>.

THURSDAY/FEB. 18

The Affordable Care Act and its Consequences for Business in 2016 and Cash Flow Budgeting and its Impact on Financial Statements. Springfield Town Center, 6500 Springfield Mall, Suite 6831, Springfield. The seminar will be led by Andy Powell, CPA of Halt Buzas & Powell, LTD. Free. <https://www.andrewsfcu.org/promo/703-647-6430>.

SATURDAY/FEB. 20

From Overwhelm to Order: The Simple Toolkit Every Caregive Needs. 9:30 a.m. Insight Memory Care Center, 3953 Pender Drive, Suite 100, Fairfax. In this workshop, you will learn about the documents, accounts, and assets that should be organized as a caregiver and will leave with a step-by-step guide to get it done. RSVP 703-204-4664, InsightMCC.org.

Cultural Diversity Panel. 4-6 p.m. Workhouse Arts Center, 9518 Workhouse Way, Lorton. Culture House is the first commission by the Workhouse Arts Center. Observing the changing demographics of the community, Workhouse Arts responded by diversifying its programs to be more reflective of the people we serve. www.workhousearts.org. 703-585-2900.

SUNDAY/FEB. 21

Tax Considerations for School and Government Employees. 2-3 p.m. Liberty Tax Service, 5622-G Ox Road, Fairfax Station. Liberty Tax Preparers provide tax-saving tips and answer questions from government and school employees, public. Free. Pre-register by Feb. 20: 703-323-5580 or fairfaxstn@libertytax.com.

TUESDAY/FEB. 23

Budgeting Basic. 7 p.m. Richard Byrd Library, 7250 Commerce St., Springfield. Budgeting Basics provides you with all the tools you need for financial success. Snacks provided. christine.peterson@hotmail.com.

WEDNESDAY/FEB. 24

Public Safety in Fairfax County, 7:30 p.m. at the Helen Wilson community room in the Franconia Government Center: Lee District Association of Civic Organizations, with speaker Chief of Police Ed Roessler. The focus of discussion will be the county's ad-hoc police practices review commission. The commission's final document can be found at <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/chairman/pdf/adhoc-final-10.8.15.pdf>.

Tax Considerations for School and Government Employees. Noon-1 p.m. Liberty Tax Service, 5622-G Ox Road, Fairfax Station. Liberty Tax Preparers provide tax-saving tips and answer questions from government and school employees, public. Free. Pre-register by Feb. 23: 703-323-5580 or fairfaxstn@libertytax.com.

WEDNESDAY-THURSDAY/FEB. 24-25

Christ Presbyterian Preschool Open House. 10-11 a.m. Christ Presbyterian Preschool, 12410 Lee Jackson Memorial Highway, Fairfax. Open house tours for the current school year and 2016-17. www.christpresbyterianpreschool.com. 703-691-9120.

THURSDAY/MARCH 3

"Planning 101: Diary of a Growing Business." 8:30 a.m. Spring Hill Suites, 6065 Richmond Highway, Alexandria. Karen Urcia of Renner CPAs will show you how to avoid the pitfalls of starting and growing your business, and how good planning can help to make your business a success. RSVP info@sfdc.org. www.sfdc.org.

SATURDAY/APRIL 2

Breathe Out. 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Fairfax United Methodist Church, 10300 Stratford Ave., Fairfax. Breathe Out has been developed to address teen stress. Registration required. breatheoutnow.wix.com/goldaward.

ONGOING

Lenten Soup Supper. Fridays from Feb. 26-March 18, 5:30-7 p.m. Holy Spirit School Cafeteria, 8800 Braddock Road, Annandale. Meat-less soup suppers on Fridays during Lent, followed by the Stations of the Cross in the Church at 7 p.m. Free. Lambie Renner, lrenner@holyspiritchurch.us.

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21 Announcements

ABC LICENSE
Mungkorn Thong, Inc trading as Sisters Thai, 4004 University Dr, Fairfax, VA 22030. The above establishment is applying to the VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE CONTROL (ABC) for a Wine and Beer On & Off Premises, license to sell or manufacture alcoholic beverages. Jaturon Srirote, owner
NOTE: Objections to the issuance of this license must be submitted to ABC no later than 30 days from the publishing date to the first of two required newspaper legal notices. Objections should be registered at www.abc.virginia.gov or 800-552-3200.

21 Announcements

ABC LICENSE
Sunshine Food LLC, trading as Sakura Grill, 6411 Shiplett Blvd, Burke, VA 22015. The above establishment is applying to the VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE CONTROL (ABC) for a Wine and Beer On Premises; license to sell or manufacture alcoholic beverages. Wei Chen, Owner
NOTE: Objections to the issuance of this license must be submitted to ABC no later than 30 dates from the publishing date of the first of two required newspaper legal notices. Objections should be registered at www.abc.virginia.gov or 800-552-3200

21 Announcements

ABC LICENSE
Food3group LLC trading as The Spice Route, 11750 Fair Oaks Mall, Unit J-141, Fairfax, VA 22033. The above establishment is applying to the VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE CONTROL (ABC) for a Wine and Beer on premises license to sell or manufacture alcoholic beverages. Gopal Kapoor, member
NOTE: Objections to the issuance of this license must be submitted to ABC no later than 30 dates from the publishing date of the first of two required newspaper legal notices. Objections should be registered at www.abc.virginia.gov or 800-552-3200

21 Announcements

ABC LICENSE
Salia, LLC trading as Holiday Inn Express, 6401 Brandon Ave, Springfield, VA 22150. The above establishment is applying to the VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE CONTROL (ABC) FOR a Wine and Beer on Premises license to sell or manufacture alcoholic beverages. Anisur Khan, member
NOTE: Objections to the issuance of this license must be submitted to ABC no later than 30 days from the publishing date to the first of two required newspaper legal notices. Objections should be registered at www.abc.virginia.gov or 800-552-3200.

21 Announcements

ABC LICENSE
DL United, LLC trading as Jacalito Grill, 8081 Alban Rd, Suite A, Springfield, VA 22150. The above establishment is applying to the VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE CONTROL (ABC) for a Beer and Wine on and off premises on Premises license to sell or manufacture alcoholic beverages. Dioniris De Leon
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Community: 'Invest in Kids'

FROM PAGE 3

County Council of PTAs; Shirley Ginwright, president of the Fairfax County NAACP; and Garza.

Several members of the Fairfax County School Board were in attendance, as well as Supervisor Cathy Hudgins (D-Hunter Mill) and Board of Supervisors Chairman Sharon Bulova.

Bulova, whose introduction was met with lively cheering, attempted to reassure the audience that the budget process is just beginning, and requires public input and communication.

"We're hearing that communication here tonight," Bulova said. "Education is our number one priority, but we have to look at the budget holistically."

Bulova echoed the earlier remarks from Ginwright that "education from the top makes us sure to have an educated community" and added that this is just "the beginning of the budget process, we have to strike the right balance and make sure our children have what they need to succeed."

McLean High School senior Emily Robinson, who took credit for creating the viral hashtag #SaveFCPS, agreed that "fully funding public schools shouldn't just be a requirement of governing bodies, it should be the foremost priority."

"I fear for the students who will be in Fairfax County after me," she said.

Sarah Mattingly was School Board member Sandy Evans' (Mason District) appointee to the superintendent's budget task force that met to run the numbers for possible cuts prior to the formation of the school system's next budget.

She explained to the audience that despite the fact she and her husband don't even have children in Fairfax County Public Schools, "nothing is more important for us to do as taxpayers, property owners, or residents, than help children."

"I'm not here for my property values," Mattingly continued, "they'll be just fine on their own. Today was disappointing, but it's not over."

For more information from Fairfax County Public Schools on its FY 2017 budget, visit www.fcps.edu/news/fy2017.shtml.



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